UNIT 6: SOCIAL POLICIES AND SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR TRIBES

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES :

After going through the chapter you will learn about the Ministry of Tribal affairs, its mandate and various schemes and policies implemented by the Government of India through Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the development, empowerment,Protection of Rights of the Tribal Population, Policies and priviledges for womwn and children.

6.2 INTRODUCTION :

Scientific DNA evidence suggests that the Africans migrated to India, Southeast Asia, and Indonesia some 70,000 years back. The Onge tribe from the Andaman Island are found to be the carrier of Negrito DNA outside of Africa. The Bhil tribe in India is regarded as “the Oldest of the aboriginal tribes”.Many of the tribal population have gone out of their way to avoid

contact with outsiders and were oblivious to Mughals, British, Maharajas or Indians in power. With the improvement of transportation and communication brought in intrusions into tribal lands.

The tribal population is referred to by different names such as 'primitive, tribal, indigenous, aboriginals, native' to name a few. Prior to the caste system in India, people were divided into different tribes.At that time; each tribe was a homogenous and self-contained unit without any hierarchical discrimination. Each tribe had a chief/head for its protection. Gradually the tribe chief assumed political and military power and was recognized as the ruler. This transition to accumulation of power led to the emergence of monarchies and then republics.

6.3 TRIBAL PEOPLE IN INDIA :

Former Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru once wrote, "There is no point in trying to make them (tribal) a second rate copy of ourselves; they are people who sing and dance and try to enjoy life; not people who sit in stock exchanges, shout at each other, and think themselves civilized."

In India, Tribal population constitutes 8.6 percentage of India's total population, which is 104 million people according to the 2011 census. This is the largest Tribal population in the world. Tribals in India are mostly concentrated along the Himalayas stretching through Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in the west to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland in the northeast. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland comprise 90% of the Tribal population of India.

In hilly areas of central India (Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and to some extent Andhra Pradesh) a large concentration of Tribal population lives bounded by the Narmada River to the north and Godavari River to the South East. In smaller numbers, tribal people reside in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, in West India in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and in the Union territories of Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

There are 573 communities recognized by the government as Scheduled Tribes. In the 1950s a policy of protection was adopted towards all the tribal peoples in India.

6.3.1 SCHEDULED TRIBES AND SCHEDULED CASTES :

The Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are official designations given to various groups of historically disadvantaged people. The terms were recognized in the constitution of India. Before Independence, they were collectively known as the Depressed Classes. To avoid any overlaying understanding of what Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste are, let us understand their differences.

Scheduled Tribes (STs)	**Scheduled Castes (SCs)**
● STs comprises 8.6% of the total total population (2011 Census)	● SCs comprises 16.6% of the population (2011 Census)
● The Scheduled Tribes are community of people who lived in tribal areas mainly forests. They are also known as Adivasis.	● The Scheduled Caste are communities who live in plains
● The Scheduled Tribe people were never discriminated as untouchables.	● The Scheduled Caste people are the one who was previously untouchables. as Later they named themselves Dalits or Harijans (Son of God)
● In the beginning, Individual Tribes had their own customs and spiritual practices. Later they followed to be Hindus or Christians.	● The Scheduled Castes are normally Hindus, Buddhist, and Sikhs.

6.4 THE MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS :

The ministry was set up in the year 1999 after the bifurcation of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment with the objective of providing a focused approach towards integrating socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes in a planned manner. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs oversees the overall policy planning and coordination of programmes for the development of STs. The subjects allocated to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs are as follows:

i) Social security and social insurance to the Scheduled Tribes.
ii) Tribal Welfare: Planning, project formulation, research, evaluation, statistics, and training.
iii) Promotion and development of voluntary efforts on tribal welfare.
iv) Development of Scheduled Tribes.
v) Overseeing Scheduled Areas.
vi) Monitoring of ST Welfare Grants based on the framework and mechanism designed by NITI Ayog.
vii) The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. The National commission reports the administration of Scheduled Areas and the Welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and issues directions regarding planning and execution of schemes essential for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in India.
viii) Implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989, including administration of criminal justice in regards to offenses, relate to Scheduled Tribes.

The primary responsibility of the ministry is promoting the interests of Scheduled Tribes with all the Central Ministries.

6.5 SCHEDULED TRIBE DEVELOPMENT :

Due to remoteness of location of most of the ST population, the majority of the population could not be benefited directly from general development programmes. Special efforts were needed to ensure an

adequate flow of benefits to the Scheduled Tribes. Since the first 5-year plan special attention was given to the needs of the ST population.

Since most of the tribal habitations were located in isolated villages and hamlets in undulating landscapes with forest areas, there is limited access to critical infrastructure facilities such as roads, communications, health, education, electricity, drinking water, and others. In order to reduce the disadvantage gap and increase the quality of life, various developmental projects were implemented by the Central Government through the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. An in-depth explanation of various schemes by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is given below.

6.6 DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES UNDER MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS:

6.6.1 EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT :

Education receives the highest priority during 'five-year' Plans to facilitate educational development among STs by providing educational facilities, incentives and support especially focusing ST girls. Few of the scholarships are discussed below:

I) **EKLAVYA Model Residential Schools for Scheduled Tribe Students:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has introduced Eklavya Model Residential Schools for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students located in remote locations to provide quality middle and high school level education.

II) **Post Matric Scholarship:** The Post Matric Scholarship for ST Children is a centrally sponsored scheme providing financial assistance to the Scheduled Tribe students pursuing higher education beyond matriculation levels. The scholarships are awarded through the government of the State/Union Territory where he/she is domiciled. The income ceiling of parents of children availing scholarship has been raised from 1 lakh to 2 lakhs per annum.

III) **Hostels for ST Girls/Boys:** The objective of the scheme is to facilitate ST students to continue their studies at distant places by extending hostel facilities to those who were otherwise unable to continue their studies due to remote location of their villages.

IV) **Free Coaching for ST Students:** The free Coaching for STs has been in operation since the Sixth Five Year Plan. Through this scheme ST students are provided free coaching to enhance their competitive capabilities to face various competitive examinations. Coaching is provided through State governments/Universities/NGOs/ private coaching institutes for competitive examinations and development of various skills for employment opportunities in the private sector. Beside coaching fee, a stipend of Rs. 1500/- for out stationed and Rs. 750/- for local students were provided per month.

V) **Strengthening Education among Schedule Tribe (ST) Girls in Low Literacy Districts:** The scheme aims to bridge the gap in literacy levels between the general female population and tribal women through facilitating 100% enrolment of tribal girls in the identified districts or blocks and in areas inhabited by Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), and aims at reducing drop-outs at the elementary level by creating the required ambience for education.

VI) **Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships:** The Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship was launched in 2005-06 as a special incentive to extend scholarships to ST students to pursue higher studies and research degrees such as M.Phil and Ph.D. The scheme is implemented through UGC and the benefits are comparable to JRF and SRF of UGC.

VII) **National Overseas Scholarships for Scheduled Tribe Students:**The National Overseas Scholarship launched in 1954-55 and implemented outside the ambit of the 5-year Plan scheme. In 2007-08, the scheme was converted to a Central Sector Plan Scheme whereby financial assistance to be provided to meritorious ST students for pursuing higher education abroad at the level of

Masters and Ph.D. The Grants are given to the selected candidates ona 100% basis directly by the Ministry through the Indian Missions.

VIII) Tribal Research Institute (TRIs): Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) have been set up by various state governments. The basic objectives of the scheme are to strengthen infrastructural needs, research and documentation activities, and training and capacity building programmes, etc. It is envisaged that TRIs work as a body of knowledge and research and as a think tank for tribal development, preservation of tribal cultural heritage, providing inputs to States for evidence-based planning and appropriate legislations, capacity building of tribals/institutions associated with tribal affairs, dissemination of information and creation of awareness.

6.6.2 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT :

Economic development among the tribal population largely depends upon agriculture and its allied activities. Besides, forest resources**,** minor forest produce contribute substantially to the tribal economy. Since more than one-fifth of the ST population depends on agriculture and forests there is a need to build capacity to diversify their livelihood income sources. To empower the tribal population and diversify their economic activities various income and employment generating programmes were implemented. Few of the programmes are discussed below:

I) National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation: National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) is a Government of India owned undertaking under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. It provides financial assistance for income-generating schemes for the economic development of Scheduled Tribes. The main objectives of NSTFDC are identification of economic activities to generate self-employment and raise the level of income, upgradation of skills and processes for scheduled tribes by providing both institutional and on the job training.

II) **Market Development of Tribal Products:** Market Development of Tribal Products/Produce is a Central Sector Scheme under which the Ministry of Tribal Affairs extends Grant-in-Aid to Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) for four main activities:

(i) Retail Marketing Development Activity;

(ii) Minor Forest Produce (MEP) Marketing Development Activity;

(iii) Vocational Training and Skill Upgradation;

(iv) Capacity Building of ST Artisans and MFP and Research & Development/Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Activity.

III) **Vocational Training Centers in Tribal Areas:** The Scheme of Vocational Training Centers in Tribal Areas was launched in 1992-93 to develop skills among the ST youth to enable them to gain employment and self-employment opportunities and improving their socio-economic conditions by enhancing their incomes. Under the scheme, training for various trades is provided by ITIs, Polytechnics, and Computer Training Centres. Besides providing Vocational training the centers run projects affiliated under 'Modular Employable Skills' and 'Craftsmen Training Scheme'. The scheme was revised in 2009 with enhanced financial norms and a time schedule for submission of proposals.

IV) **Grant-in-Aid to Voluntary Organizations:** The prime objective of the scheme is to enhance the reach of the welfare schemes of the government and fill the gaps in service deficient tribal areas especially in the field of education, health, drinking water, social security, etc. through the efforts of voluntary organizations and to provide an environment for socio-economic upliftment and overall development of the Scheduled Tribes (STs). Grants can be availed by any registered Voluntary Organization (VO)/ Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Institutions or organizations set up by Government as autonomous bodies either under a statute or as a society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 working in relevant fields for atleast three years.

6.6.3 SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT :

Due to their former isolated existence, the tribals are not equipped to deal with the ever-changing and complex socio-economic developments surrounding them. At times they are susceptible to exploitation, atrocities, and crimes, alienation from their land, denial of their forest rights and overall exclusion of their rightful entitlement directly or indirectly. Some of the Rights and Acts for the safeguard and protection of Tribals are mentioned below :

i) Article 17 abolishes Untouchability.

ii) Article 46 requires the State 'to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the population, in particular, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, and provide protection to them from all forms of exploitation and social injustice.

iii) Article 15 (4) refers to special provisions for their advancement.

iv) Article 16 (4A) refers to 'reservation' in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in services under the State in favour of STs/SCs.

v) Article 338 provides for a National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, with duties to investigate and monitor all matters relating to safeguards provided for them, and inquire into specific complaints and to participate and advise on the planning process of their socio-economic development, etc.

vi) Article 330 and Article 332 of the Constitution respectively provide for reservation of seats in favour of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in the parliament and legislative assemblies of the States.

vii) Under Part IX related to Panchayati Raj System and Part IX(A) of the constitution related to Municipalities, reservation for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes aslocal bodies have been envisaged and implemented.

The Constitution of India has provided Rights, to safeguard and made various provisions to improve the lives of the Scheduled Tribes in India. Even with Constitutional safeguard,they are the most vulnerable section of the society because of which they had to face segregation, inequality, and violation of Constitutional rights. Let us discuss the pertaining problems that the tribes in India suffered over the course of time.

i) **GEOGRAPHICAL SEPERATION:** The tribal communities are spread in different parts of India. Majority of the Tribal population live in remote areas like dense forests, mountains, hills, deep valleys, etc. and have unique traditions and cultures because of which they cannot correlate with modern society. This kind of social as well as physical separation or seclusion has declined the development of the tribal communities.

ii) **LAND ALIENATION:** Rights of Tribals over forests is inalienable and historical. But their problem started with British Colonialism in India.Britishers started exploiting rich tribal resources across India. As Tribal people did not haveany legal rights over their land, it became easier for non-tribal people to acquire their land because of the forest policies during the pre-Independence period. Those policies were inclined towards commercial purposes andthis led to large scale displacement for the tribal people from forests.

Often law declares unregistered lands as national parks, sanctuaries or reserved forests. In some forests, the tribal people are not given access to forest produce and grazing of cattle is rendered as illegal by the Government. These people live under the continuous threat of being ousted from their homes.

iii) **CULTURAL PROBLEMS:**The cultural fabric of the Tribal communities is entirely different from the mainstream society. The customs, practices, and traditions followed by them are often misinterpreted and suspected by mainstream society. Different Christian missionaries during British rule tried to influence and convert Tribal communities from their faith and indigenous traditional practices during the British Colonial period.

Moreover, their physical isolation from non-tribal communities and a lack of cultural understanding between the Tribals and the Non-Tribals has led to the negative stereotyping of tribals as primitive, uncivilized and unskilled. This negative stereotyping is used to justify their exclusion from certain services and economic opportunities.

iv) **EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM:**The literacy rate among tribes is 58.96% (2011 census) whereas it was 18.53% in 1991. Few of the North-Eastern states like Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Kerala have the highest literacy rate among tribal communities in India; there is still a long way to go to achieve 100% literacy among tribal communities.

The main problem identified is teachers appointed in Tribal areas by the Government are mostly non-Tribal. There arises a communication gap between them because most tribal people do not know languages except their mother tongue because of which education is deeply hampered. Another major problem is that the curriculum of education is not suited to the tribal people and do not have relevance to them directly. The special holistic initiative needs to be taken up to educate the tribal population.

v) **ECONOMIC PROBLEMS:** The tribal people are economically one of the most backward communities in the country and are often exploited due to their innocence and illiteracy. They are mainly involved in agriculture activities for ages. As the literacy rate among the tribals is quite low and lacks professional skills they are unemployed or underemployed.

Due to lack of employment opportunities, tribals migrate and works as bonded labourers in the agriculture sector, brick kilns, stone quarries, power looms and handlooms. They are irregularly paid without any safety or health regulations.

vi) **HEALTH AND SANITATION PROBLEM:** Health and Sanitation is one of the most challenging problems for tribal people because of illiteracy and ignorance and their hesitation to accept the modern concept of health and sanitation and modern ways of health diagnosis.

Alcoholism is one of the major problems existing in tribal regions. Brewing alcohol is practiced on a daily basis and it is sold at a very cheap price which not only affects their health but also increases thecrime rate. Communicable diseases like dysentery, diarrhoea, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, etc are quite common. The non-communicable diseases like liver cirrhosis, cancer, hypertension, chronic respiratory diseases, hypertension, and malnutrition are common among Indian tribes. The high infant and child mortality are because of a lack of literacy and poor sanitation facilities.

Water borne diseases are also very prevalent in tribal regions as there are no proper facilities for drinking water. Sometimes due to scarcity of water in remote tribal regions, people are forced to drink contaminated water giving rise to a number of diseases. Water borne diseases have claimed many lives of Tribal people in various places like Odisha, Chattisgarh, Rajasthan to name a few.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Which areas in India has the highest concentration of Tribal population?

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Q2. When was the Ministry of Tribal Affairs formed and from which former department it was bifurcated?

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Q3. Which sector contributes substantially to Tribal Economy?

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6.7 LET US SUM UP

- Scientific DNA evidence suggests that the Africans migrated to India, Southeast Asia, and Indonesia some 70,000 years back.
- The Bhil tribe in India is regarded as “the Oldest of the aboriginal tribes”.
- Prior to the caste system in India, people were divided into different tribes.
- In India, Tribal population constitutes 8.6 percentage of India’s total population, which is 104 million people according to the 2011 census.
- There are 573 communities recognized by the government as Scheduled Tribes.
- The major Education Development project implemented are Eklavya Model Residential Schools, Post Matric Scholarship, Hostels for ST Girls/Boys, Free Coaching for ST students, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships, National Overseas Scholarship and Tribal Reseach Institute (TRIs).
- The major Economic Empowerment project implemented are: i) National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation; ii) Market Development of Tribal Products; iii) Vocational Training Centers in Tribal Areas; iv) Grant-in-Aid to Voluntary Organizations.
- Major Rights and Acts for Tribal Population are Article- 17, 15 (4), 16(4A), 46, 330, 332, 335,338 of the Constitution of India.



6.8 Further Reading

Verma. M.M. (1996) “Tribal Development in India”; Mittal Publications, New Delhi.

6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Q1.

In India, Tribal population is mostly concentrated along the Himalayas stretching through Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in the west to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland in the northeast. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland comprise 90% of the Tribal population of India.

In hilly areas of central India (Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and to some extent Andhra Pradesh) a large concentration of Tribal population lives bounded by the Narmada River to the north and Godavari River to the South East. In smaller numbers, tribal people reside in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, in west India in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and in the Union territories of Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Answer to Q2.

The ministry was set up in the year 1999 after the bifurcation of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Answer to Q3.

The main contributing sectors are forest resources, minor forest produce, agriculture, and allied activities to Tribal economy.



6.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Question (Answer within 150 words)

Q1. What are the major differences between Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes?

Q2. What was the main objective for formation of a separate Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the subject allocated to them?

Q3. Why there is a need to have special Protection Rights and Acts for Tribal population? State the major Acts for the protection of Tribal people and their significance.

B) Long Questions (Answer within 300-500 words)

Q1. Mention the various schemes implement by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the education development of Tribal students in India and discuss each of the schemes in a few lines.

Q2. What are the main schemes launched by GOI for the economic empowerment of the Tribal population and discuss in brief their objectives?

Q3. What are the major issues and challenges faced by Tribal populations even in the 21st Century, explain each of the issues?

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